

Political Prophecy in Elizabethan England

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Political Prophecy in Elizabethan England

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Abstract:

This thesis examines political prophecy in England during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). The belief that foreknowledge of events could be attained through means such as the practice of astrology, revelation from God, or the interpretation of supposedly prophetic texts was widespread in English society during the early modern period. This thesis discusses how those both within and outside of the government used prophecy in their engagement with the political issues which faced England during Elizabeth's reign, especially in relation to religion and the succession. Because prophecy offered a source of authority for political change it was often employed in opposition to established authorities, prompting legislation criminalising seditious prophecies and printed works condemning them. By examining a wide range of primary sources, including assize records, Privy Council reports, depositions, diplomatic and administrative correspondence, and printed tracts and sermons, this thesis reveals how prophecy pervaded the political culture of Elizabethan England.

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